

## MILKEN FAMILY FOUNDATION

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# Milken National Educator Awards

## *Fact Sheet*

### **The Awards**

The Milken Family Foundation's National Educator Awards, the largest teacher recognition program in the United States, was created to reward, retain, and attract the highest quality K-12 educators to the profession. Each Milken educator receives an unrestricted financial award of \$25,000 and an all-expense-paid trip to Washington, D.C., to participate in the annual Milken National Education Conference in May 2006.

### **Key Statistics**

- \$25,000 awards to each of 100 new Milken educators from 48 states and the District of Columbia  
\$50,000 to two educators in Wisconsin in 2005
- Established by Milken Family Foundation in 1985  
Wisconsin joined the Milken Educator Awards Program in 1999
- More than 2,100 Milken Educator Award recipients since inception  
20 recipients, \$500,000 distributed since the program began in Wisconsin
- \$2.5 million in awards in 2005-06; more than \$54 million in awards since inception

### **19th Annual National Notification Activities**

During the 19th annual National Notification Activities, October 24-November 4, 2005, 100 exceptional teachers, principals, and specialists – recommended without their knowledge by a blue-ribbon panel appointed by their state departments of education and confirmed by the Milken Family Foundation – will be surprised by the news of their \$25,000 awards, which can be used however they choose. These announcements are typically made during emotional, all-school assemblies throughout the country, attended by students, educators, local and state officials, and media.

### **Milken Educator Network**

The Milken Educator Network is a voluntary association of more than 2,100 Milken educators, other exemplary educators, and business leaders from across the country who are dedicated to improving teacher quality and utilizing research and expertise to shape education policy at state and local levels.

### **Milken Family Foundation**

The Milken Family Foundation was established in 1982 to discover and support inventive and effective ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The Santa Monica, California-based foundation advances this mission primarily through its work in education and medical research.



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TWO DECADES OF ADVANCES IN  
EDUCATION AND MEDICAL RESEARCH



## Criteria for Selection

Based on guidelines established by the Milken Family Foundation, participating state departments of education appoint blue-ribbon committees that identify candidates for evaluation and recommendation to the foundation. Identification and selection procedures are confidential, and the program does not include a formal nomination or application procedure.

The criteria for the selection of outstanding elementary and secondary school teachers, principals, and other education professionals as Milken Educators include all of the following:

- Exceptional educational talent as evidenced by effective instructional practices and student learning results in the classroom and school;
- Exemplary educational accomplishments beyond the classroom that provide models of excellence for the profession
- Strong long-range potential for professional and policy leadership; and
- Engaging and inspiring presence that motivates and impacts students, colleagues, and the community.



## Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What is a Milken Educator Award?

The Milken Family Foundation National Educator Award provides public recognition and an unrestricted financial prize of \$25,000 to elementary and secondary school teachers, principals, and other education professionals who are furthering excellence in education.

### 2. How are Milken Educators selected?

Based on guidelines established by the Milken Family Foundation (see next FAQ), the department of education in each of the 48 participating states and the District of Columbia appoints an independent blue-ribbon committee to recommend candidates for selection to the Foundation. There is no nomination or application procedure for the award.

### 3. What are the criteria for selection?

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### 4. How are the awards announced?

The main element is surprise! Each fall, newly selected recipients are taken completely by surprise at schoolwide assemblies. With an entourage of media and distinguished officials, a Foundation representative or the state chief of education typically notifies the recipient, often accompanied by the governor and other state leaders.

### 5. Are the recipients required to do anything specific with their monetary awards?

Milken Educators may use their **unrestricted** \$25,000 awards in any way they wish. A Foundation survey found that the largest number of past recipients have used their award to finance their children's education or their own continuing education. Others have purchased equipment for their schools, funded scholarships for their students, and even financed the adoption of their children.

### 6. When do the recipients receive their monetary prize?

Recipients are notified of the award during the program's national notification events in the fall. The following May, they will participate in the Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference in Washington, D.C., culminating in an inspiring and emotional awards ceremony at which recipients receive their \$25,000 checks.

### 7. Are both elementary and secondary school educators selected each year?

The award alternates each year between elementary and secondary educators.

**8. What other benefits besides the \$25,000 do recipients receive?**

- Professional development opportunities and public recognition at notification events and the annual Milken Family Foundation National Education Conference;
- Membership in state and national networks of nearly 2,100 distinguished educators, including the Milken Educator listserve;
- Opportunity to participate in ongoing projects like the Milken Festival for Youth and *The Children of Willesden Lane* curriculum guide and recordings.

**9. Why does the program put such an emphasis on teacher quality?**

Recognizing and rewarding quality educators has been a hallmark of the Milken Educator Awards program since its inception. However, due to the lack of opportunities for educators to thrive, more classroom teachers are leaving the profession and fewer young people pursue careers in education. The Milken Educator Awards aim to reverse this trend by focusing public attention on the need for excellent teachers and encouraging able, caring, and creative people to join the teaching profession.

**10. Besides the Milken Educator Awards, what other ways has the Milken Family Foundation worked toward meeting the crucial need for high-quality teachers?**

While Milken Educators are a testament to America's many talented educators, the need to attract, develop, motivate, and retain more high-caliber teachers remains a profound challenge. To address this need, the Milken Family Foundation created a complementary initiative to the Milken Educator Awards, known as the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP), to restructure and thus revitalize the teaching profession. Through sustained opportunities for career advancement, ongoing school-based professional development, instructionally focused accountability, and performance-based compensation, TAP has already demonstrated meaningful progress in drawing more teachers to careers in K-12 education—and keeping them there. Since its inception in 1999, TAP has expanded to more than 100 campuses, impacting more than 45,000 students and 3,100 teachers.

Based on TAP's growing support and expansion, the Teacher Advancement Program Foundation was established in 2005 as an independent public charity to build public/private partnerships among educators, unions, policymakers, corporations, governments, foundations, and individuals to ensure a quality educational opportunity for all students.

**11. What are the other areas of interest of the Milken Family Foundation?**

The Milken Family Foundation was established in 1982 to discover and advance inventive ways of helping people help themselves and those around them lead productive and satisfying lives. The Santa Monica, California-based foundation advances this mission primarily through its work in education and medical research. Among Milken Family Foundation initiatives and grant-based programs are the following:

- American Epilepsy Society/Milken Family Foundation Epilepsy Research Award, Grant & Fellowship Program
- *The Children of Willesden Lane* Curriculum Guide and Recordings
- Mike's Math Club
- Milken Archive of American Jewish Music
- Milken Festival for Youth
- Milken Scholars
- Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) Foundation

**12. Does the Milken Family Foundation have a Web site?**

Yes -- [www.mff.org](http://www.mff.org). For additional questions, call the Milken Family Foundation at (310) 570-4775.

